



Belgium, Italy and Slovakia Contribute to Humanitarian Clearance in Iraq

Baghdad, 5 February 2020 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is continuing its life-saving work in Iraq. UNMAS is grateful for the support it received from three generous donors. The Governments of Belgium (USD 1.6 million), Italy (USD 784,000) and the Slovak Republic (USD 18,750), donated more than USD 2.4 million to ensure that explosive hazard management, training and technical support and risk education activities will advance in 2020.

The presence of explosive hazards, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in areas retaken from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Da'esh, continues to endanger the lives of women, men, girls and boys and hinder the return of the 1.4 million people who are still unable to go home.

Belgium, Italy and Slovakia recognize that the work of UNMAS is necessary to achieve lasting stability in Iraq. As the United Nations launches the “decade of action” to realize the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the path-clearing work of deminers leads the way for all development in the country. Creating a safe environment enables people to return home, move freely and make productive use of their land.

Mr. Vanden Bulcke, Ambassador of Belgium to Iraq, said: *“After Iraq declared victory against Da’esh in 2017, everyone discovered with dismay the exact level of contamination left by the terrorist group in the regions they occupied. The priority of clearing the contaminated rumbles, houses and infrastructures became of national interest for Iraq. By supporting the work of UNMAS in mine risk education, clearance and capacity building, Belgium wants to guarantee with its share safe grounds to start reconstructing the country and help the population come back to their houses and their land.”*

Mr. Michele Morana, Director of AICS Jordan and Iraq, stated: *“The appalling extent of mine-contamination in Iraq, is still producing dreadful consequences on the health and livelihood of the conflict affected communities. Therefore, Italy remains fully engaged in pursuing the objective of a mine free Iraq and in supporting UNMAS endeavour toward such goal”.*

Mr. Lubomir Macko, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in Beirut, added: *“Watching the dramatic events unfolding in today's Iraq we should not forget that many of its people still suffer from the consequences of the conflicts, the main phase of which is already over. Unexploded mines and explosive hazards continue to claim victims among civilians who want to return to their homes and rebuild their lives there. That is why UNMAS's work in Iraq is extremely important and I am glad that the Slovak Republic could support it by a financial contribution. Iraq is one of the main recipients of Slovak humanitarian aid.”*

“Explosive hazards are found everywhere: in infrastructure, schools, hospitals, homes and under bridges. These deadly items not only hinder reconstruction and stabilization efforts, but also impede the return of displaced communities to some kind of normal life. That is why UNMAS work in Iraq remains critical and we are very grateful for the support received by Belgium, Italy and Slovakia.” said Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager in Iraq.

Contact

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